

Vasculature of the Spleen

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At the splenic hilum, the splenic artery and vein can be seen entering the spleen to supply and drain the organ. The opening of the splenic vein has been kept patent by the insertion of silicon tubing in the model. This model shows the most superior branch of the splenic vein has been sectioned from its normal passage into the spleen. The “tortuous” or twisted shape of the splenic artery can be appreciated as it branches at the hilum. This reflects the overall curled and twisted shape of the vessel across its course from the coeliac trunk to the spleen.

The splenic artery and vein give rise to short gastric vasculature as well as the left gastro-omental vasculature. In this specimen, the splenic artery and vein have been cut after these vessels have branched, and thus they cannot be seen in the model.

The splenorenal ligament connects the spleen to the left kidney and contains the splenic artery, splenic vein and tail of the pancreas. It is formed by the overlaying of peritoneum that was originally part of the dorsal mesentery during embryological development over this vasculature. The splenorenal ligament is not observable on the model as the peritoneum has been removed in order to expose the splenic vasculature.

The gastrosplenic ligament connects the stomach to the spleen and contains the short gastric arteries and part of the left gastro-omental artery at its origin as it branches off the splenic artery. Like the splenorenal, the gastrosplenic ligament is formed by the overlaying of peritoneum that was originally part of the dorsal mesentery during embryological development. The gastrosplenic ligament is not present as the splenic artery has been dissected after its formation.

The outside of the spleen consists of a thin fibrous capsule. Due to its delicate nature and the large quantity of blood usually contained in the spleen, the fibrous capsule is vulnerable to rupture.